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Intergenerational Support for Retirees: The Role of Adult Children in the Livelihood of their Parents after Retirement in Bumula Constituency, Kenya

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Abstract:

There is a cultural expectation among the Luhya and particularly the Bukusu sub-tribe that children's provision of financial support and care to their retired and ageing parents is a guarantee. However, whether this is obligatory or not is still a question of discourse in among researchers and scholars. Despite an array of studies, there is no consensus on the role of children in supporting their elderly parents. This paper therefore entails a study that was conducted in an attempt to elucidate intergenerational support retirees with focus on retired primary teachers in Bumula constituency. Respondents were selected from ten locations including Bumula, Kabula, Kimaeti, Siboti, Mateka, Mayanja, Napara, Mukwa, Mabusi and Khasoko. A total of 28 respondents were obtained through purposive and snowball sampling techniques. In-depth interviews were then conducted and responses tape-recorded for thematic analysis. The Altruism Theory by Auguste Comte formed the foundation of the study as presented in this paper, the study found out that despite the high level of unemployment among youths, retired primary school teachers in Bumula received substantial economic, social and psychological support from their children. It was established that adult children's support, though on the decline, is a critical component in the life of ageing parents because it affects the quality of life after retirement and thus, requires holistic and continuous approach. Adult children's support to the elderly and more so to parents in modern society is perceived as voluntary and/ or discretionary as opposed to the traditional times when it was mandatory. The study support recommends a need for concerted efforts to strengthen the agents of socialization and enhance stakeholder participation to address economic and policy factors militating against adult children's support to ensure dignified lives to the elderly.

Keywords: *Intergeneration, child-parent support, primary teachers, retirement, bumula constituency*

1. Introduction

High poverty levels that arise due to the high cost of living especially in rural parts of Kenya means most primary school teachers use all their earnings to supplement their living as well as to meet their families' needs (Lucas & Mbiti, 2012). National Centre for Education Statistics in the USA reported teacher's engagement in other jobs in the form of income-generating activities to supplement their families' primary needs (USA Today, 2019). Those who are capable, continue with those businesses even after retirement. In Kenya, although all primary school teachers have pension as social security fund after retirement, most of them resort to other activities to fetch them extra money beside their official teaching profession even with the expectation of their adult children's support post retirement. Upon retirement, many primary school teachers are however in dilemma of what should be done and where to go. They as well struggle with issues such as loss of income and self-worth (Kyule, 2011). According to Olds et al., (2018), life transition such as leaving employment to retirement requires re-organising the way time is spent and most retired people fill this space previously used to with various activities which are by choice or obligation.

The cultural expectation among the Bukusu and other Luhya sub-tribes that children's provision of financial support and care for their retired and ageing parents is a guarantee creates a lot of societal inconsistencies. This practice is nonetheless evident in many rural parts of Kenya (Murithi, 2016). According to Makoni and Stroeken (2005), adult children working in the cities support their families through remittances. However, some are unable to provide such support due to their own unstable financial situations. In some cases, on the contrary, some retired primary school teachers use their pension funds to support their children and extended families which becomes a burden to the retirees. Past studies focused on retirement and the role of the National Social Security Fund (NSSF) in Kenya. Githui (2012), Mutua (2011) and Njuguna (2010) for instance argue that most Kenyan employees contribute towards their retirement pension fund, but these studies have, however, underestimated the culturally constructed discourse of intergenerational support of children to their retired, elderly parents. So how do these retired primary school teachers make meaning of intergenerational support from their children? This study, therefore, sought to address the knowledge lacuna by other scholars in this regard by gaining a deeper understanding of the complexities of support and care from the retirees'

perspective especially in Bumula, Bungoma County in Kenya which is characterised by socioeconomic vulnerability, low quality of life and limited survival strategies.

2. Theoretical Underpinning

Intergenerational support entails act or behaviour that adult children exhibit with regard to ensuring that their retired parent's physical, social and psychological needs are met to whatever extent possible within their capabilities. Physical needs include food, shelter, clothing and medical. Altruism theory as promoted by Auguste Comte cited in Steiner (2015) was adopted in this study to understand and explain parents' support to their children and vice versa. Through socialization of members of society, values and altruistic tendencies are inculcated which prepare them to function as reliable members. Socialization is culture-specific although modern religions such as Christianity and Islam also impact on socialization in Africa and Kenya in particular.

Proper socialization has an influence on altruism within the family and by extension society (Steiner, 2015; Hadden & Long, 1985). It can be argued that properly socialized children appreciate their parents care and in turn support them in old age. In contrast, poor socialization may result in ungrateful (less altruistic) children who may not support their parents in old age or even worse, neglect and abuse or mistreat their parents. Therefore, good socialization results in strong altruism within the family and greater support for parents whereas poor socialization results in weak altruism which subsequently results in less support to parents by some children within the family. Comte identified women and clergy as key players in the education of society on altruism (Steiner, 2015) due to the fact that both primary (family) and secondary socialization (other groups like peers, church) help to strengthen altruistic instincts in order to tame egoism. According to Comte women have a great role to play in raising altruistic children.

3. Literature Review

Research on retirement and intergenerational support by scholars like Damman and Duijin (2017) demonstrate that as much as adult children of retirees have the potential to support their parents, there is scanty information about intergenerational support upon their retirement such as the extent and the degree of support. Albeit there is growing literature on challenges experienced by elderly people in Kenya and the interventions in place (Bennet, 2001; Gok, 2014; National Council for Population and Development (NCPD), 2016), there is no literature on support and care accorded to the retired primary school teachers by their children in rural areas like Bumula Sub County. Documenting and analysing retired teachers' views and perceptions on the care and support they receive from their adult children contribute towards a deeper understanding of intergenerational support in Kenya. This also provides a critique of why and how intergenerational support in rural areas like Bumula may or may not be of concern. In this inquiry, probing the perceptions of the retired primary school teachers from Bumula on support and care they receive from their adult children presents a new scholarly dimension of examining intergenerational support issue in Kenya and particularly developing countries in general.

This review of existing studies on retirement and intergenerational support and care is useful for two purposes. First, it situates and maps the extent of current studies in this area by providing an overview of the main areas of interest and themes in relation to retired teachers in Kenya, particularly in Bumula Sub-County. Secondly, is to understand existing lacuna in current literature in order to carefully map out contribution that this study aims at. It thus provides argument that adds knowledge to the existing studies on retired primary school teachers' understanding of intergenerational support and advances an explanatory framework that engenders a nuanced understanding of the contribution that retired teachers in Bumula may add to the understanding of intergenerational support in Kenya.

As the term suggests, intergenerational support constitutes basic factors related to multigenerational relational systems that are needed in coping with the challenges faced by individuals across generations, positions, families and communities. Although changes in the world demography are transforming life, social and family relations are found to be fundamental to the health and well-being of family (Bengtson, 2001). Even with less appreciation, intergenerational support has become highly influential especially among individuals and families who continue to be interdependent (Riley & Riley, 1993). Retirement and family interconnections are grounded in theoretical work on social and generational relations. While there is a logical link between retirement and intergenerational support, this study examines support that exists among adult children and their retired parents. In doing so, the study adopted a multiple dimension to examine retirees' connection with their family members and to assess the kind of support that adult children accord their retired parents.

There are a number of scholars who argue that adult children ought to help their retired parents either emotionally or economically. For instance, in relation to retirement, Van Solinge and Henkens (2008) argue that adult children need to help retirees adjust to the challenge of loss of the work and in order to develop a satisfactory post-retirement lifestyle. Van Tilburg (1992) argues that adult children of retirees should be included in non-work social network that plays a vital role around retirement period. This is a form of social support that involves talking to parents about retirement. A study in Canada by Funk (2012) reveals quality lifestyle to retired parents in households where adult children accorded support to their older parents not as a form of 'payback', but rather as a result of strong feelings for mutuality in support, filial duty and reciprocated love. Another study by Grundy (2005) in Britain reveals a strong intergenerational exchange between older persons and their adult children. Although the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS, 2018) indicates that seven million Kenyans are unemployed, a situation which hampers financial support to elderly parents by adult children, available literature indicate that apart from financial assistance, adult children provide other forms of support. This is evident from research by Nalugya et al. (2018) in Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania

and Zimbabwe which found out that most young people stand in for old people and the sick by offering emotional support to parents and other relatives living with HIV, this includes talking to them, comforting, giving them hope, reassurance, advice, being confidants, keeping company, and just being there for them. This care does not only apply to individuals' hard-hit by the HIV scourge or other terminal illness, but also to the elderly and retired.

While the available set of literature on intergenerational support argues that adult children are under an obligation generally to support their parents' retirement processes, there is also a set of literature that views children as a form of financial burden to their retired parents. Damman, Henkens and Kamijin (2011); Szinovacz and DeViney (2000); and Szinovacz, DeViney and Davey (2001) argue that adult children that are dependent on their parents decrease retirees' quality of life. This is supported by a new study by London School of Economics and Political Science between 2007 and 2014 which shows that when adult children leave home, parents enjoy their independence and that adult children's presence is viewed as violation of their life course stage (Science Daily, 2018). It is further noted that the dependency of adult children depletes their parents' assets and income necessary for their retirement and quality of life (Senior One Source, 2013). A decrease in parent's quality of life is also evident in the expenditure incurred by retired parents who use their savings and meagre pension to sustain the dependent adult child or children in fear of negative reaction from their adult children if they do not provide. This is further noted in a study by Nyambetha et al. (2003) which revealed the great burden that the elderly people bare as caregivers to orphaned children as a result of HIV/AIDS scourge. This is viewed as a set back to the old and retired who expect to enjoy their little pension in retirement.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, literature by scholars like Funk (2012); Giarrusso et al. (2005); Muhwava (2008); Nyirenda and Newell (2010); and Schatz and Ogunmefun (2007) on intergenerational support suggests that reciprocity there is socio-cultural reciprocity and dependence between younger and older generations. Initially, parents and older people are responsible for the care and well-being of the younger generation, but once that generation achieves independence and/or older people become less physically and economically active, the younger generation is expected to care for and support the older generation. In sub-Saharan Africa, intergenerational support between the young and old generations governed family togetherness that includes emotional connectedness, geographical proximity, shared norms, values and expectations (Lowenstein, 2005). Cultures, norms and socialization of the individual, family and society are vital for maintaining a sound intergeneration support system (Giarrusso et al., 2005) in most African societies.

However, due to the political economy of most African societies, there are circumstances that are beyond the cultural, individual or family social-cultural expectation that may hamper the flow of support between the younger and the older generations. Giving an example of South Africa, the ever-rising level of unemployment among the younger generation limits their ability to support their retired parents and the older generation in general (Statistics SA, 2015). This has made some adult children to depend on the pensioners despite their limited resources. The composition of households may thus present opportunities for mutual exchanges of care and support (Statistics SA, *ibid.*). A combination of economic hardships and the HIV epidemic in sub-Saharan Africa has contributed to major shifts in intergenerational support system (Muhwava, 2008; Schatz & Ogunmefun, 2007). The older generation has been made to look after the younger ones. Other than poverty, political and economic issues, ageing is mostly a family crisis in Africa. It is the family that takes the responsibility for caring and providing for the needs of the elderly (UNAIDS, 2012). For instance, according to Eltayeb *et al.* (2012), Sudanese extended family system is still intact and family members rely on one another in times of need. Older family members in Sudan are cared for by the younger generation as they age. However, protracted civil war and conflict in Southern Sudan have disrupted the family set up leaving many families orphaned and widowed and left to the care of extended family networks (Cultural Atlas, 2018). Against this background of increasing poverty, unemployment, civil strife and political instability, the incidence of neglect and elder abuse in Africa is likely to increase.

4. Methodology

This study took a qualitative approach to data collection. The author explored experiences on intergenerational support from adult children during their parents' retirement period. Qualitative case study design was therefore adopted by focusing on the Bumula constituency case in Bungoma County. According to Corry and Parry (2016) a qualitative case study design enables the researcher to delve into an occurrence and understand it from multiple facets. For the purpose of this study, interviews and review of secondary sources of data were conducted. As opposed to an ethnographic approach, qualitative research design was seen to be appropriate for this study due to the emphasis that was put on the relationship and interaction between the author and participants. Additionally, qualitative research dependent on a set of limitations that shape exploration (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). Similarly, all the foreseen setbacks were put into consideration before the commencement of the actual fieldwork in Bumula.

Interpretivism paradigm as asserted by Saunders and Lewis (2012) is used to establish the foundational meaning attached to organizational life from a subjective perspective. This study also adopted interpretive paradigm to understand how retired primary school teachers in Bumula make sense of the support they were accorded by their children. Bumula being a rural area was described to be among the environment which the participants had to negotiate nonexistence of intergenerational support during their post-retirement period. This was vital in the study.

The sample selection for this study was generally guided by the knowledge that a sample in this study was not a representative of the whole population, (Cohen, Manion *et al.*, 2007). The participants selected using snowball technique and purposive sampling because they were deemed to yield the required empirical data. Creswell (2012) asserts that purposive sampling requires prior knowledge of whether that sample has rich information. In total, Bumula Sub County comprises 4 Divisions and 10 Locations Therefore, 30 retired primary school teachers (3 from each location) were obtained. However only 28 respondents were interviewed given that two were unavailable for interview.

The researcher's use of in-depth interviews, explored retired primary school teachers' views and feelings on retirement and intergenerational support. Thematic and content analysis was used on primary data and thus complemented each other in the shaping and evaluation of the data collected. Alhojailan (2012) opines that thematic analysis allows a researcher to evaluate data-related classifications and patterns. In this analysis, the data was analysed to establish important themes and connotations. As anticipated, the data formed themes on how retired primary school teachers viewed their children's support and care as the implications for the development and implementation of the related care and support policies for the elderly in Bumula and Kenya as a whole.

5. Findings and Discussion

In this paper, the author sought to explore the role of children in providing intergenerational support to their retired parents. In achieving this, the study through a thematic approach of analysis, the findings are presented in form of emerging themes as follows.

5.1. Understanding Children's Support for Parents

Intergenerational support implies provision that involves multigenerational systems required by humankind to keep up with issues in the family set up for proper adjustment. The study sought to understand the concept of adult children's support to their parents, also known as *buyeti khubasasi* in Bukusu language among retired primary school teachers in Bumula. The results showed lack of clear definition of the concept. Respondents in this study indicated that children's support is what children do to enable parents to meet their daily needs like food, clothing, shelter, farm inputs and medical care. Children's support is intergenerational as one respondent described it:

I have parents that I support as I am supported by my adult children and this extends to close relatives as well. Support entails buying clothes, food, financial support for daily needs and investment, shelter, furniture, bedding (Personal communication, R22, Male, 71 years).

Children's support to retired primary school teachers was understood by respondents as being close to parents by offering them social and moral support devoid of money. Respondents viewed support to be children's good deeds to parents as an appreciation of the care and support accorded to them by their parents in their childhood. Other respondents viewed parents' support by adult children as a soft loan given to children that required to be offset in adulthood and an investment. A majority said it was a way of paying back for the parental care when they were young. Support to children is thus seen by such respondents as a social debt that accrued as they grew up and needed to be paid in adulthood. According to respondents in this study, adult children's support to parents should be holistic by securing parents' social, physical, moral and psychological wellbeing. It is also intergenerational in the sense that the parents (retired teachers) supported their parents while they were still in employment and in turn, they (retirees) are supported by their children. It also emerged that children's support is a societal cultural norm that is maintained as a sound intergenerational support system in most African countries. This is echoed by Giarrusso *et al.*, (2005) who asserts that there are socio-cultural reciprocity and dependence between the younger and older generations. Albeit the traditional society's mandatory norm of children's support for parents irrespective of the adult child's economic situation still stands, Okoth and Anami (2012) argue that urbanisation which is culpable for extended families and cultural values breakdown, and AIDS/HIV pandemic have heavily impacted on the socio-cultural fabric. This informal support system is overburdened and thus incapable of keeping the elderly out of poverty.

Although children's support for parents in old age is seen as a gesture of appreciation, others view it as paying back to parents a debt by caring for their weak economic, physical and emotional state; a notion that Funk (2012) disputes and argues that support to parents should be spurred by strong attachment and reciprocity of love.

5.2. Children's Support for Parents

It is mandatory in almost all human societies for younger people to support the elderly. Harmon and Blieszner (1990), Novero and Schdeidt (1988) indicate that as much parents wish to maintain their independence by not expecting support from their adult children, parents also hope that children will be there for them when called upon to do so. The kind of support and care received from adult children of retired teachers in Bumula included providing foodstuffs to ensure good nutritional health, assisting parents to pay school fees for their siblings and grandchildren left under the care of their elderly parents due to factors like death, divorce or separation of their parents. It is a fact that old age comes with diseases. Respondents identified high blood pressure, Arthritis, Diabetes and Cancer to be prevalent among retirees. Some of the adult children enrolled their parents or are in the process of registering their parents with the National Hospital Insurance Fund (NHIF) to ensure good medical care and are committed to paying their parents NHIF monthly contribution. Those adult children with unregistered parents on NHIF cover pay medical bills whenever parents require medical attention. This explains why most primary school teachers in Bumula had a life expectancy of above 70 years.

Adult children remit money to their parent's time and again to enable them to meet their daily needs and attend to emergencies. Largely, adult children were close to their parents by paying visits and calling them often. Some unemployed adult children with no monetary support kept their parents' company. It is emphasized by Nalugya *et al.*, (2018) that most young people comfort their parents, giving them hope and reassurance, offering advice, being confidants and just being there for them. Adult children also support parents by renovating their old houses or building them new ones to ensure decent shelter. This has the second benefit of improving the image and self-esteem of parents. Some children bought parents dairy animals for milk in the home and oxen for ploughing and also as a source of income. For economic support, adult children buy farm inputs; supervise farm work for parents who are weak due to illness or age, pay farm labourers

and help with the herding of animals. Improving parents' homes was noted whereby adult children supplying their parents' home or house with tap water, electricity, fencing, clearing bushes, hiring security, buying house appliances like gas cookers and fridges, beddings and mattresses and beds for their parents. Some children take over parents' community debts and thus offer advice or financial support. Some of their views on the support accorded to retired primary school teachers are captured in their statements presented below:

Our children provide household stuff, money for the hospital, buy beddings and clothes and they also make repairs in our house. These children do virtually everything (Personal communication, R09, Female, 64 years).

When we are sick our children request us to go and live with them until we recover, I surrendered my children to stay with my mother until she died (Personal communication, R13, Female, 67 years).

If it wasn't for my children, I would have died long ago because they hire doctors for my treatment (Personal communication, R06, Male, 76 years).

My children's also run errands for me and children who are economically constrained can just visit to keep me company and know how I'm doing, this way I won't feel lonely (Personal communication, R27, Male, 61 years).

The parents should support the child first so that the child can support the parent in future (Personal communication R16, Male, 74 years).

One of my children put a standing order in the bank for me, I receive some money monthly (Personal communication, R12, Male, 70 years).

Support to parents is a continuous process which only stops upon the death of a parent. As one respondent said, 'support should continue up to the grave, otherwise it would mean that my children are not grateful for what I did for them' (Personal communication, R18, Male, 66 years).

This study also noted few parents who did not receive any support from their children and thus depended on extended family members as one respondent lamented, 'my children don't help me with medical care; even medical expenses for my wife are paid for by her sisters' (personal communication, R07, Male, 66 years). Lack of support to parents by adult children in the African or other setting is a cause of immense sadness and suffering for ageing parents as this study established from affected respondents. It attracts curses or suffering in the lives of those adult children. This resonates with one respondent who exclaimed that 'my children don't support me..., sometimes one can be tempted to forget about God' (personal communication, R19, Female, 65 years). This level of agony and sorrow apparently can be detrimental to future generations. From the overall view, adult children's support to their parents in Bumula is wanting. Majority of adult children were reported to mistreat, abuse and accuse their parents of witchcraft as indicated in the UN Department of Economics and Social affairs Report of 2014 (UNDESA, 2014). One respondent put it that, 'I know of cases where some parents wander around begging and live in poverty which is wrong' (personal communication, R22, Male, 71 years).

Generally, besides lack of support to retired parents, the state of the elderly people in Bumula is pathetic. Most of them lack virtually all necessities due to poverty. Some elderly parents are frustrated having no children to support them after their children dropped out of school for lack of school fees or truancy and are unemployed. The high rate of teenage pregnancy, HIV and AIDS pandemic and dysfunctional families are also high leaving grandchildren under the care of old, frail and sickly grandmothers. This clearly provides a picture of the elderly people's misery in most societies as indicated by Muhwava (2008). Statistics SA (2015) notes that in South Africa the plight of elderly people has been accentuated by the deleterious effects of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, ever-growing poverty and a high rate of unemployment which have made retirees breadwinners rather than dependents.

Youth migration to urban areas or other rural areas in search of employment has left their ageing parents with no adult children to take care of. Some of the youths who migrate to towns end up with illnesses such as HIV/AIDS and thus return to be nursed by their parents which becomes a great burden and really overwhelming to the ageing parents who are living on little resources and energy as age advances. For such parents, the idea of enjoyment and relaxation in old age becomes simply a myth just as Nweke (2013) notes that in Nigeria, where most family structures usually have one income earner with quite a number of dependents, retirement becomes a reality that is often dreaded. In that, a retiree still has the duty of taking care of their immediate and extended family members. The possibility of this burdened parents' early death due to stress and fatigue emanating from these extended parenting responsibilities to their adult children and grandchildren is high. Most youths in this community were said to lack religious commitment which result in vulnerability to social ills due to lack of a sound moral foundation emanating from a religious background and proper socialization. The young generation is faulted for neglecting their parents as one respondent noted, 'our boys and girls who get educated in this area of ours do not support parents as I have heard from many parents in this community' (personal communication, R18, Male, 66 years).

The apparent general neglect of parents by educated and working children could be due to discouragement or external meddling by envious neighbours or fear of visiting parents due to prevalence of hostile social environment at home. This compels parents to discourage the working adult children from frequenting home to reduce the risk of being injured or losing them due to malicious acts (including witchcraft) by some negative people in the community. This eventually restrains altruism within the family, community and society with the end result being lack of social progress and intensification of poverty. From the foregoing account of the state of the elderly in Bumula, this study reiterates that there is need for urgent attention to the problems of youths and lack of or inadequate support to parents by adult children in Bumula.

5.3. *How Children Ought to Support Parents*

Responsible children are a parent's strength and asset in old age. Parent-child relationship as Umberson (1992) comments coupled with solidarity and social bond between a parent and child determine and dictate the support that both parent and child accord each other. However, parents should not entirely rely on their children's support except in extreme need given that they (children) have their own family burdens. Since adult children reciprocate support to parents if they received the same in childhood, there is need for parents to invest in their children's education and support them holistically if they expect support from their children in old age. Feelings of inadequate support from parents by adult children inhibit support.

Improper socialization results in economic, moral or socially weak adult children who may not embrace the norm of support to their parents. Respondents in this study to a large extent did invest in their children and thus expected their children's support to the grave. In their view, children's support to their parents includes medical care such as insurance cover (NHIF), providing means of transport in the home such as motorbike or vehicle to ease movement given their frail and old state, maintaining the home by helping with clearing of bushes, initiating income-generating activities such as farming, livestock and poultry keeping, supervising farming, buying farm inputs and paying farm labourers. Respondents also felt that children should also provide parents with decent housing by building them new houses or renovating old houses which had an effect on improving the homestead's phase and their parents' esteem.

Another kind of support mentioned was monetary for their daily expenses, making phone calls and paying parents regular visits to monitor their wellbeing. These relieve loneliness and boosts psychological and social security for the parents. For the old and incapacitated parents, respondents felt that it was the adult children' responsibility to hire caregivers for them. The following statements from respondents confirm these facts on how children should support parents.

Besides financial support, children also assist parents with farm work cleaning the compound so that parents don't break down due to overworking; They can also share new ideas on farming etc.(personal communications, R15, Male, 76 years).

For those parents with difficulty with walking, means of transport should be provided like buying a car for old parents. Children should support their parents especially in settling medical bills because old people are prone to ailments; provide food, company and good shelter and hire caretakers for the very old ones (personal communication, R13, Female, 67 years).

Children shouldn't just send money to parents without appearing in person where parents are. Parents feel happy or glad whenever they see their children around (personal communication, R16, Female, 67 years)

Am a church leader and I would like my church to be developed. I would like them to support me financially on this (personal communication, R22, Male, 71 years).

Support to parents should be holistic and ends with the death of a parent personal communication, R18, Male, 66 years).

Children should surrender at least a grandchild to live with the parents, Children should mind the health of their parents, and provide farm inputs, clothes and shelter (personal communication, R6, Male, 78 years).

Support is necessary for elongating the life of parents. Children should not abandon their parents. Support from children brings unity in the family' (personal communication, R12, Male, 70 years).

5.4. *Respondents' Support for Their Parents*

Although this study's focus was to understand the mode and extent to which adult children supported retired primary school teachers in Bumula, the author deemed it vital to establish the kind of support respondents accorded their parents while still in employment. This is indicated by Litvak (1985) who states that irrespective of the age security or formal support systems in any given society, there is an intensive reciprocal informal support between the generations. This was critical in understanding the concept of intergenerational support and how the retired primary school teachers understood the concept of adult children's support to parents and how they negotiate for this support from their children. This study revealed that respondents (primary school teachers) who received support from their children also supported their parents when they were in employment. Those who have surviving parents still supported them. This demonstrates the flow of intergenerational reciprocity in the family.

Almost all respondents (27) reported having supported parents apart from one respondent who did not due to financial constraints. Support to retirees' parents took the form of clothing, sending of money, education of siblings, buying land for landless parents, the building of new houses or renovation, buying animals, providing medical care and farm input. Statements below show the respondents expressions on how they support their parents.

I was the firstborn, so I assisted to educate my 2 brothers who now oversee, I still support my mother who is 90 years old; Since it is my responsibility and she is so close to me (personal communication, R11, Female, 65 years).

Yes, I did support my mother financially. My father died at 98 years and even on his death bed, he gave me his life savings (personal communication, R05, Male, 77 years).

My mother is still alive and I make sure she's well taken care of; I buy food clothes medication pay caretaker and even take her for holiday (personal communication, R14, Female, 64 years).

In this study, almost all respondents (retired primary school teachers) had ceased supporting their parents since most of them had died. Important to note about children's support is that it is a continuous process up to a parent's death. Respondents' surviving parents were mothers who were over 90 years old. This confirms the fact that women have a longer lifespan as indicated in Scientific American (2019). However, this longevity may not be attributed to biological factors but rather other intervening social factors such as being Godly, closeness to their children, keeping physically fit

and a proper diet. Consequently, long life exposes women to predicaments such as lack of support from adult children and severe forms of abuse than men. Thus, elder abuse has a feminine face. Studies indicate that most elderly widowed women are abandoned by their adult children and family, molested and killed. For instance, in Kisii and Kilifi Counties in Kenya, 102 suspected elderly women were hunted and killed between 2013 and 2014 with claims of witchcraft laid on them (UNDESA, 2014). Sexual abuse of the elderly women is rampant as Olum (2013) notes that majority of old people in Kenya face economic and social problems which include poverty, poor health, HIV/ AIDS, abuse and violence. Standard Media Group (2016) reported that mistreatment and disrespect for the elderly within families and society is on the rise in Kenya. The elderly is subjected to lots of suffering including sexual abuse, denial of food and clothing, inadequate diet, not being accorded medical care, abandonment, isolation and loneliness.

One respondent said, 'My grandchildren and i still support my stepmother who is still alive by providing food, clothing, medical care and security' (personal communication, R01, Male, 84 years). This indicates that adult children's support also extends to close relatives in this community which vividly exemplify the fact that intergenerational reciprocity within the family has no limit as long as one is able and willing to help their kin in need. This study established that intergenerational reciprocity in typically close-knit families is evident and is extended from grandparents, parents to grandchildren and vice versa. Such reciprocity only thrives if altruism is inculcated in the family members across the generations. Failure of altruistic tendencies of sacrificing own interests for the good of others, family and society as noted by August Comte leads to an overgrowth of egoism which in turn leaves the vulnerable members like the elderly people without support, which reduces their happiness and longevity.

6. Conclusion

Besides the support received from their own adult children and grandchildren, retired primary school teachers also supported their own parents while still in employment. Children's support to parents is a social norm and requirement which ensures the continued survival of the family, community and society. Failure in this flow of intergenerational reciprocity leads to break down of the family ties that are the cornerstone of the society and eventually the emergence of social evils such as elder neglect and /or abuse in the society. As established in this study, all respondents supported their parents with basic needs such as food, clothing, shelter, medical care, farming and security. This was continuous until the death of the retirees' parents. Adult children's support to parents is partly determined by the gender of an adult child, income and the kind of wife a son marries. This is consistent with Auguste Comte's view that women are empathetic and more altruistic than men given their nurturing role and as agents of socialization (Steiner, 2015).

Accessing adult children's support is not automatic. It is mostly a voluntary act and necessary in an elderly parent's life. It is a universal social norm and obligation in all humankind for children to support their parents especially in old age (Solinge &Henkens, 2008). This study indicated that retired primary school teachers in Bumula received support though not adequate as indicated in the study. The kind of support accorded to them was by educating their siblings and orphaned grandchildren in the family and paying medical expenses for their parents. Some children paid for their retired parents monthly premiums for medical cover in the National Hospital Insurance Fund (NHIF), visited their parents to check on their wellbeing, surrendered grandchildren to their grandparents for company and help with household chores, provided food, clothing, decent housing, beddings and improving the home by supplying utilities like electricity and tap water. Those adult children who are unable to accord monetary support as shown in the study can offer other types of assistance by clearing bushes in the home, repairing fences and fortifying security in the home. To ease cooking for ageing parents some children purchase modern cooking appliances like gas cookers, fridges to ensure parents' comfort.

Respondents described adult children's support to be adult children's acts that enable their parents to meet their basic, social, physical, emotional and moral needs. They viewed adult children's support to be a payback of a social debt to parents for their care in childhood. However, it is not clear to what extent adult children should reciprocate for their parent's upbringing (Keller 2006, Delden, 2011). Therefore, support was described to be a two-way traffic process that entails adult children's support to parents and vice versa.

7. Recommendation

There is thus a need to appreciate and encourage successful adult children to support the social and economic progress of the community. The agents of socialization such as family, especially mothers and the church, have to play their role of nurturing altruism and moderating egoism in order for the community to realise increased adult children's support, economic and social progress.

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